REMARKS

The application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action mailed on May 3, 2006. Claims 1-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ikeda et al., JP 2001 199511 ("Ikeda") in view of ISO/IEC 15693-3 ("ISO"). Reconsideration is respectfully requested for the following reasons.

Claim 1 recites, inter alila, a "reference transmission section for transmitting information, which becomes a reference for determining response timing of the noncontact electronic tag attached to the object, to the noncontact electronic tag." The determination of the "response timing of the noncontact electronic tag" is an important feature of the claimed invention. The specification discloses, for example, that "data stored [in the RF tag] ... is also used as a time slot for determining the response timing of the transmission timing of the response signal. For example, if the data stored in area 0 is '0001' ..., the RF tag 30 responds at the second timing ... . Thus, 16 response timings exist from '0000' ... as the first timing to '1111' ... as the 16th timing ... ."

The Office Action admits that Ikeda fails to teach or suggest this limitation, and relies on ISO for the shortcoming. The Office Action asserts that ISO discloses this limitation by teaching that "EOF in inventory request format determines response time t1 (section 9.1.1, page 18) by the tag." Office Action, page 3. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

In ISO, time t1 refers to a preset time period – not to "determining response timing of the noncontact electronic tag." ISO discloses a VCD (vicinity coupling device) that sends an EOF (end of frame) signal to a VICC (vicinity integrated circuit card). ISO teaches that "[w]hen the VICC has detected an EOF of a valid VCD request ..., it shall wait for a time t1 before starting to transmit its response to a VCD request ... ."

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Thus, ISO teaches that the EOF signal, when sent by the VCD, starts a preset time period t1 for the VICC to respond. ISO does not teach or suggest "determining response timing of the noncontact electronic tag," as recited in claim 1. For at least this reason claim 1 is allowable over Ikeda and ISO, whether taken alone or in combination.

Claims 2-7 depend from claim 1 and contain every limitation of claim 1. Claims 2-7 should be allowed for the same reason claim 1 is allowable, and because the unique combinations recited in claims 2-7 are neither taught nor suggested by the references. For example, claim 2 recites "setting the part of predetermined data stored in the noncontact electronic tag as reference for determining a response timing for causing the noncontact electronic tag to transmit response data." The cited references, whether taken alone or combination, fail to teach or suggest this limitation, and this is another reason for allowance of claim 2.

Claim 8 recites a "noncontact electronic tag storing inhibition detection-possible data indicating permission or inhibition of passage through a passage section as an application family identifier." The Office Action asserts that Ikeda teaches this limitation because "Ikeda teaches coding signal, wherein coding signal comprises lending processing data (Fig. 7, par. 0038, code associated with completion of lending out is set to '0' –gate opens) and return processing by coding signal to '1' (par. 0035)."

Applicant wishes to point out that although Ikeda discusses "lending-out coding" and "return processing" as pointed out by the Office Action, Ikeda fails to teach or suggest a "noncontact electronic tag storing" such data. Ikeda clearly teaches that such data is stored in its computer 14 – not in its noncontact electronic tag 11. For example, Ikeda teaches that its system "checks this lending-out coding signal 21b [from stationary antenna 21a] by management computer 14." Paragraph [0038].

Thus, Ikeda fails to teach or suggest a "noncontact electronic tag storing ... data indicating permission or inhibition of passage through a passage section" as recited in claim 8. ISO also fails to teach or suggest this limitation, and the Office Action does not rely on ISO for teaching this limitation. For at least this reason, claim 8 is allowable.

Claim 9 recites, inter alia, "transmitting information, which becomes a reference for determining response timing of the noncontact electronic tag." Claim 13 recites, inter alia, "transmitting information, which becomes a reference for determining response timing of the noncontact electronic tag." Claim 17 recites, inter alia, "setting a part of predetermined data stored in the noncontact electronic tag as reference for determining a response timing."

For the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1, claims 9, 13 and 17 are allowable over the cited references, whether taken alone or in combination. Claims 10-12 depend from claim 9, and claims 14-16 depend from claim 13. Dependent claims 10-12 and 14-16 should be allowed for the same reasons their base claims are allowable, and for other reasons.

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In view of the above remarks, Applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

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                                        By _____

                                        Thomas J. D'Amico
                                            Registration No.: 28,371
                                        Peter A. Veytsman
                                            Registration No.: 45,920
                                        DICKSTEIN SHAPIRO MORIN &
                                            OSHINSKY LLP
                                        2101 L Street NW
                                        Washington, DC 20037-1526
                                        (202) 785-9700
                                        Attorney for Applicant

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